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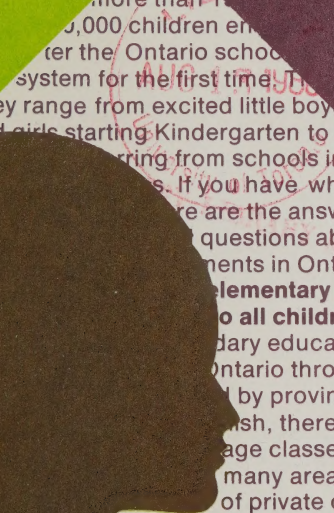
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Ministry
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Bette Stephenson, M.D.
Minister

Government
Publications

Entering School: Who, When, Where, and How



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Every year more than 150,000 children enter the Ontario school system for the first time. They range from excited little boys and girls starting Kindergarten to older children transferring from schools in other provinces or other countries. If you have a youngster who is about to start school, here are the answers to some frequently-asked questions about school entrance requirements in Ontario.

Is education in Ontario's elementary and secondary schools available free to all children?

Free elementary and secondary education is available to resident pupils of Ontario through a publicly supported school system financed by provincial grants and local municipal taxes.

As well as instruction in English, there are publicly supported French-language classes or schools for French-speaking pupils in many areas of the province.

Also, there are a number of private or independent schools in the province. Parents who wish to send their children to "private" or "independent" schools must pay whatever fees are charged by such schools.

When must a child start school in Ontario?

If you have a child who will be six years old before the first day of school in September (usually the first Tuesday after Labour Day), he or she must begin Grade 1 in September. Children who have not turned six by the first day of school but will do so before December 31 may also begin school in September—if their parents so desire.

Younger children may be registered for Kindergarten classes. Most school boards operate *Senior Kindergartens* that accept children (in September) who will be five years old by the end of December. School boards that offer *Junior Kindergarten* programs accept (in September) youngsters who will reach their fourth birthday by December 31.

Are there any circumstances in which a school-aged child may be excused from attending classes?

By law, all children between the ages of six and sixteen must attend an elementary or secondary school. Children *may* be excused, however, if, in the judgement of the Provincial School Attendance Counsellor:

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- (a) they are receiving satisfactory instruction at home or elsewhere;
 - (b) they are unable to attend school because of sickness or some other unavoidable cause;
 - (c) transportation is not provided by a school board and there is no school that they have a right to attend within reasonable distance from where they live (the distance that is considered reasonable varies with the age of the child).

The fact that a child is blind, deaf, or mentally handicapped does not, in itself, excuse a youngster from attending school if he or she is eligible for admission to the W. Ross Macdonald School for the blind, an Ontario school for the deaf, or a school or class for the trainable mentally retarded.

How do I enrol my child in school?

Most school boards hold a registration day in the spring for new pupils. The date is usually advertised in local newspapers, or may be obtained by calling the appropriate school board office in your area. If you missed registration day, or if you have just arrived from another province, you should make sure that your child begins to attend classes as soon as possible. If you are a Roman Catholic and wish to enrol your child in a separate school rather than a public school, contact the nearest Roman Catholic separate school board for registration information.

What proof of age and other documentation are required when registering a child for school?

Local school boards set their own requirements, but in all cases parents must submit evidence showing that the child is entitled to attend school. Official documents, such as a birth certificate, baptismal certificate, or passport, are usually requested. If your child was born in Ontario, a copy of his or her birth certificate can be obtained by writing to the Registrar-General, Macdonald Block, Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1Y5. A cheque or money order for \$3, payable to the Treasurer of Ontario, must be included. Birth certificates for children born elsewhere in Canada can be obtained from the province in which the child was born.

Who evaluates the experience of students who have attended school in another province or another country to determine at which grade level they should be enrolled?


The school principal makes the decision, based on past records—report cards, transcripts, or diplomas. If necessary, he may consult an education evaluation specialist in the Ministry of Education.

Is there anything I can do to help my children when they begin school or transfer to a new school?

Very definitely! You are the most important influence in your child's life. If you have positive feelings about school, so will they, and their initial anxiety or shyness will disappear much more rapidly. If the older child is helped to regard his or her new school as a challenge, the adjustment will be made more smoothly. The parent who takes an interest in his or her youngster's social and educational activities in school makes a genuine and positive contribution to the child's development.

If you would like to know more about registering your child, contact the principal of your local school, or call the appropriate school board office in your area. Information is also available from any one of the regional offices of the Ontario Ministry of Education. Regional offices of the Ministry are located in the following cities:

Northwestern Ontario:
Thunder Bay (475-1581)
Midnorthern Ontario:
Sudbury (556-3480)
Northeastern Ontario:
North Bay (474-7210)
Western Ontario:
London (472-1440)
Central Ontario:
Willowdale (Toronto 491-0330)
Eastern Ontario:
Ottawa (225-9210)



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